

# The Phoenix School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	134227
<b>Local authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	381640
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Declan McCarthy

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	61
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Rose
<b>Headteacher</b>	William Bush
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 February 2009
<b>School address</b>	Great North Road Grantham NG31 7US
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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy

Additional Inspector

Lynda Walker

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Parts of 10 lessons were observed taught by eight teachers. Meetings were held with a small group of parents and carers, an ex-student, a group of students currently on roll, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation relating to school improvement planning and self-evaluation, minutes of meetings of the governing body, safeguarding policies, the school's data on students' progress and students' work. Questionnaires returned by staff, students and 10 parents and carers were scrutinised.

## Information about the school

The Phoenix School serves students from the county of Lincolnshire with most referrals from South Lincolnshire. All students have a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Approximately a third of students have additional disabilities and special educational needs due to complex medical, psychiatric and learning needs. Since the last inspection, an increasing proportion of students have been referred with more complex and severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, including a history of poor attendance. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds and the vast majority are boys. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school provides a breakfast club and a range of after-school activities, including an army cadet force, from Monday to Friday, as part of its extended day provision which is managed by the governing body. The school has gained a number of new awards since the last inspection, including the Green Flag Eco award, the full International Schools award and the Unicef Rights Respecting Schools award.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school with strong community links. It is not yet outstanding because much of the teaching promotes good, rather than excellent, progress and the persistent absence of a small minority of students prevents them from achieving as well as they could.
- Students' achievement is good overall. Most students make good and sometimes outstanding progress, successfully re-engaging with learning and attaining a wide range of academic and vocational courses by the end of Year 11.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers carefully plan a variety of interesting activities to stimulate students' enjoyment of learning. They work closely with key workers who provide good support for students with additional special educational needs by breaking tasks down into smaller manageable steps and clarifying any misconceptions students may have. Occasionally, learning tasks are not matched to different abilities. Although feedback is generally good, there are sometimes missed opportunities to inform the oldest students of how well they are progressing towards their expected grades.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Parents and carers recognise the good and often outstanding progress their children make in behaviour and in their attitudes to learning. Although most students' attendance rapidly improves, this is not always the case despite the school's best efforts to promote good attendance.
- Leadership and management are good. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, all leaders provide a clear direction for the school's work. The governing body provides good oversight for the work of the school and ensures statutory requirements are met. Self-evaluation is used well to identify clear priorities for improvement. Good systems for performance management and effective leadership of teaching have sustained good quality teaching and

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brought about much improvement in assessment throughout the school. Vocational and enrichment opportunities are particular strengths of an outstanding curriculum.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on students' good achievement by:
  - increasing by 50% within the next academic year the attendance rate of the small minority of students who are persistently absent
  - consistently providing students with different tasks in lessons, which are matched to their different learning abilities
  - ensuring students who are taking examinations are always given feedback on the grades they are expected to achieve, how well they are doing towards those grades and how they could improve their performance

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Students join the school having experienced significant educational failure, many with a history of very poor attendance. The complexity and nature of students' behavioural, emotional and social difficulties means that their attainment remains low. Nevertheless, their achievement is good overall and there are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups based on their level of special educational needs. The very large majority who make rapid improvements in attendance achieve well as they engage with the increasingly wide choice of academic and vocational courses on offer. All those who attend regularly gain a wide range of qualifications including GCSEs, BTEC certificates, Functional Skills and Entry Level certificates and move on to further education or employment. Learning and progress are good for most and outstanding for the few students who achieve five or more good GCSEs. The small minority of students who are persistently absent do less well.

At both key stages, students make good progress in lessons. In a Year 7 design and technology lesson, all students were totally focused on making hinges and some proudly provided a number of examples of things they had made including a pencil holder, a picture frame and a child's toy. In a Year 11 English lesson, students made good progress towards their GCSE, using complex sentences and a variety of interesting vocabulary in writing about Water Aid. This well-chosen topic interested students and increased their awareness of the impact of foul water on world communities where clean water is in short supply. Students make at least good and often outstanding progress in physical education lessons because they are provided with a rich variety of very well-planned activities, based on Olympic and Paralympic sporting activities. For the past two years, all students have been successful in gaining the BTEC certificate in sports.

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Students with disabilities and additional special educational needs make equally good progress towards their individual targets because key workers provide good support in lessons, explaining specialist vocabulary, and breaking tasks down into smaller achievable steps to increase these students' understanding. A range of excellent intervention groups, especially in reading, spelling and writing, accelerates the progress of those who find learning difficult so they quickly catch up with their peers. Some make rapid progress in their reading ages within just two terms.

In discussion and in their questionnaires, parents and carers express the view that their children are making good progress.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teachers maintain excellent relationships with students and manage their behaviour extremely well, through the positive and consistent use of praise and encouragement. This, together with enthusiastic teaching, the brisk and lively pace of lessons and good use of questioning to extend students' thinking, leads to good learning and progress. Teachers have excellent knowledge of students' prior attainment and generally use this well to match activities to the next steps in their learning. However, on a few occasions, students of different abilities are given the same task to do so that some find the task too difficult and others find it too easy. Teachers usually provide good feedback to students in lessons and in marking on how well they have done and how to improve their learning. Occasionally, there are missed opportunities in Year 11 to link this feedback to progress against the grades students are expected to achieve in their examinations.

In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, students were using Pythagoras' theorem to solve problems. Skilled questioning by the teacher enabled them to identify and calculate the length of the hypotenuse. Understanding of mathematical language was promoted well through the careful explanation of terminology together with a practical exercise to illustrate meaning. As a result, all students increased their knowledge and understanding and made good progress.

Teaching and support for students with additional special educational needs is good. Teachers plan lessons carefully with key workers, and they work seamlessly to provide good support, breaking tasks down into smaller achievable steps. Key workers also carefully re-interpret technical vocabulary, provide good opportunities for students to work independently check their progress and offer valuable feedback later in the lesson. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are promoted very effectively within a range of subjects. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson on genetics, the teacher challenged students to illustrate their understanding of the technical terms 'phenotype' and 'genotype' in promoting literacy skills. Many examples of good teaching of numeracy and ICT were also evident in students' work, for example, in plotting co-ordinates in geography, recording data in science and the use of word processing and graphics to produce high quality coursework. Teaching promotes

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students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively with carefully chosen topics such as fair trade, opportunities to write about what it feels like to be bullied, to reflect on learning and progress and to work collaboratively as well as independently in lessons.

Inspection findings confirm that parents and carers are right in their view that teaching is good. Most students agree that teaching is good, teachers make learning interesting and help them to improve their work.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour and safety are good. Most parents and carers feel that behaviour is good, that their children make rapid improvement in their behaviour and in their awareness of how to keep safe. Students adopt safe practices in using the internet, in moving around the school and in handling equipment properly. Most students make at least good and often outstanding improvement in their behaviour, in their attendance and in their re-engagement in learning. This is partly as a result of outstanding opportunities for enrichment through the extended school day. They eagerly take part as members of the army cadet force and in the wide variety of sporting events supported by high quality professional coaching.

Students respond well to the consistent management of behaviour and implementation of the discipline policy. They say that behaviour is usually good and that bullying is rare. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying, for example, prejudice-based bullying and actively seek to prevent it. The use of physical restraint and exclusions are occasionally necessary to control behaviour and are implemented carefully and recorded meticulously.

Most students have positive attitudes to learning and attend very regularly. Good behaviour in lessons, with few incidents of disruption, contributes to good learning and progress. The small minority who are persistently absent do not re-engage well enough with learning. This is despite the school's very thorough and extremely well-conceived strategies for improving behaviour by working closely with those families who are most hard to reach.

### **Leadership and management**

The visionary leadership of the headteacher, who is ably supported by his senior leadership team, ensures a strong commitment to school improvement. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum has grown from strength to strength since the last inspection, for example, with a wide range of residential visits to France, The Netherlands and Germany. Gaining the International Schools and the Unicef Rights Respecting School awards has considerably enhanced students' understanding and appreciation of diversity throughout the world and contributed to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their desire to make a difference is seen, for example, in their successful fundraising to support a school and village in Rwanda. Leaders have built strong partnerships with local businesses, sporting organisations,

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colleges and other schools. This has helped to provide more opportunities for vocational learning, high quality coaching and support for learning for those students who are most resistant to following an academic curriculum.

School self-evaluation, although a little aspirational, is based on accurate and systematic performance management. Good opportunities for continuous staff training and development clearly have a positive impact on students' achievement. Monitoring of teaching and of its impact on learning, achievement and personal development is used effectively to establish well-conceived priorities for improvement. As a result, the range of vocational courses such as BTEC certificates has increased, providing further options for students and increasing their re-engagement with learning. Strong partnerships with careers advisers and local businesses have made an excellent impact on work-related learning. Equally strong links with external agencies have a good impact on students' personal development. Gaps in the performance of different groups are narrowing because equal opportunities are promoted well. Curriculum options are matched well to individual needs and the school provides good intervention and support programmes. The school has made good improvements since its last inspection and demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

The governing body holds the school to account for its work, through, for example, regular focused visits and lesson observations. Members ensure statutory requirements are met, particularly for safeguarding, where the arrangements are fully in place. Rigorous procedures for vetting all staff and visitors, updated training and high levels of supervision and vigilance ensure the safety and well-being of students.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



24 May 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of The Phoenix School, Grantham, NG31 7US**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when we inspected it recently and for telling us what it is like to be a student at The Phoenix. We were impressed with your good behaviour in lessons and around the school and your respect and courtesy towards us. You, and those parents and carers we spoke to, told us yours is a good school and we agree. Here are some of the best things we found out about your school.

- Your achievement is good and you make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in your learning.
- Teaching is consistently good and teachers work closely with your key workers in planning interesting activities for you to do and in providing good support for those of you who find learning more difficult.
- Your behaviour is good, you stay safe in school and most of you make rapid progress in your behaviour and attendance.
- You show respect for others and are courteous and polite to visitors.
- Leadership and management of your school are good and all staff are committed in doing their best for you.

I have asked your school to build on your good achievement by reducing the rate of absence of those students with poor attendance. I also want teachers to always ensure you are given learning tasks which are neither too easy nor too difficult. Finally, I have asked your teachers to always inform those of you who are doing examinations, how well you are progressing towards your examination grades in lessons and when marking your work. You can help by always attending regularly and by telling your teachers if work is too hard or too difficult.

Good luck to those of you who taking examinations.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy  
Lead inspector

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